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ABSTRACT

This report outlines specific actions that can be taken to improve the climate of educational opportunity and to reduce criminal incidents on school grounds, school buses, and at school functions. The recommendations made here were formulated by a committee consisting of teachers, school officials, police officers, attorneys, local and state government officials, parents, and other concerned individuals. The suggestions, divided into seven sections, specify what schools, school districts, state agencies, communities, legislators, parents, and students can do to reduce school violence. Some of the proposals include: developing and implementing a comprehensive Safe School Plan to provide a safe environment for all students and the adults who serve them; establishing a District Safety Plan; supplying needed resources and training to local school districts; making available social and recreational organizations for youth; asking employers to grant 4 hours paid leave per year so that employees who are parents can become involved in their childrens' schools; making education a top priority; and becoming involved in school activities. (RJM)

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SCHOOL SAFETY ACTION REPORT

Recommendations from
Action Group for School Safety

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February 1994

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CRIME REDUCTION IN SOUTH CAROLINA SCHOOLS

A proposal of what **SCHOOLS** can do to reduce criminal incidents on school grounds, school buses, and at school functions and improve the climate of educational opportunity.

SCHOOLS CAN:

- Develop and implement a comprehensive Safe School Plan to provide a safe environment for all their students and the adults who serve them.
- Involve local law enforcement and other community agencies. Involve law enforcement authorities in classrooms and assembly programs and encourage regular visits to the school.
- Establish a School Safety Committee to function as a sub-component of the School Improvement Committee. Develop a School Plan in conjunction and coordination with a District Safety Plan. Involve representatives of local law enforcement, community agencies, parents, teachers, students and school administrators, and address the needs of the local school.
- Review safety needs periodically, including extracurricular events.
- Monitor and respond to safety issues continuously, making adjustments as necessary.
- Develop, as an established component of school operating procedures, a supervision plan of halls, common areas and assemblies. Provide for adult monitoring of high risk areas.
- Include conflict management and responsible behavior in the curriculum.
- Establish peer mediation teams and involve students in planning and implementing discipline plans, utilizing student leadership.
- Instill appreciation and respect for people of various cultures.
- Establish a liaison and regular communication with law enforcement authorities and other agencies. **(DSS, JJ, DHEC, DMH)**.
- Report incidents to authorities following district and state procedures. Maintain records of incidents. Identify community and school crime trends.
- Provide training to students and staff regarding school rules, behavior expectations, disciplinary procedures, how to deal with intruders and using emergency procedures.
- Train teachers to identify **"troubled students"** and to respond to them in the most appropriate manner.

- Initiate a confidential **"Safety Hotline"** for reporting school related criminal activities.
- Develop public safety announcements for broadcast and dissemination within the school and the community.
- Evaluate policies, procedures and practices regarding the handling of crisis, conflict and violence, and the counseling services needed for each situation.
- Provide appropriate counseling services for students.
- Provide a safe physical environment, which is clean and well maintained, with regular safety evaluations.

CRIME REDUCTION IN SOUTH CAROLINA SCHOOLS

A proposal of what **SCHOOL DISTRICTS** can do to reduce criminal incidents on school grounds, school buses, and at school functions and improve the safety of students and adults in South Carolina schools.

SCHOOL DISTRICTS CAN:

- Establish a **District Safety Plan**.
- Identify and train a **District Crisis Response Team**.
- Communicate clear standards of student behavior and disciplinary codes.
- Expect consistent, uniform enforcement of disciplinary codes; provide support to school personnel in their efforts to discipline students.
- Work with and through other agencies in providing appropriate consequences and alternative programs for students who violate disciplinary codes.
- Provide teacher and administrator training programs promoting the development of a safe school environment.
- Provide leadership for innovative curriculum development.
- Provide for professional consultation to schools for security evaluation.
- Assist other agencies and districts in establishing effective and reliable methods for the timely sharing of student information, especially regarding students who have a history of criminal behavior.
- Each **district** should have a **local planning team** that includes:

  School custodian or maintenance staffer
  Administrator, Superintendent, or designee teacher and student
  Parents
  Public safety personnel
  Local hospital representative
  Community agency representatives (DSS, DMH, JJ, etc.)
  Local media representative
  Representative from a church or synagogue
  Representative from public utility
  Representative from Disaster Preparedness

- Develop a policy to deal with all school visitors.
- Receive ongoing training.
- Develop a training program on the knowledge and skills necessary to manage conflict to be conducted with all adults in the Education Community.

CRIME REDUCTION IN SOUTH CAROLINA SCHOOLS

A proposal of what **STATE AGENCIES** can do to reduce criminal incidents on school grounds, school buses, and at school functions and improve the safety of students and adults in South Carolina schools.

STATE AGENCIES CAN:

- Provide needed resources and training to local school districts.
- Establish an information clearinghouse for school safety.
- Incorporate a safe schools component into the school improvement process. **(SDE)**
- Include school safety issues as an element of the Leadership Academy Seminar Series. **(SDE)**
- Establish policies that promote safe schools.
- Participate with other agencies in the establishment of procedures for transferal of student information between agencies and schools.
- Encourage local offices to initiate cooperative efforts for safety with schools.
- Require juvenile probation and parole counselors to confer with school officials and to conduct regular visits with their clients at school. **(JJ)**
- Require juvenile parole counselors to assist in the re-enrollment of their clients in the public school upon release from a juvenile corrections facility. **(JJ)**
- Have juvenile court officials request that Family Court judges make school attendance, appropriate school behavior, and performance an integral part of probation orders. **(JJ)**
- Develop and conduct a statewide training program on **Non-violent Living** and **Creative Conflict Management** through all private and public organizations and agencies for citizens over eighteen years of age who participate and use the organizations and agencies. Agencies that could participate in training programs for clients are:

1. **Social Services**
2. **United Way Agencies**
3. **Housing Authority**
4. **Social Security**
5. **Counseling Services**
6. **Hospitals**
7. **Mental Health Services**
8. **Nursing & Nursing Home Services**
9. **Outpatient Facilities**

CRIME REDUCTION IN SOUTH CAROLINA SCHOOLS

A proposal of what **COMMUNITIES** can do to reduce criminal incidents on school grounds, school buses, and at school functions and improve the safety of students and adults in South Carolina schools.

COMMUNITIES CAN:

- Provide social and recreational organizations (park and recreation representatives, boys/girls clubs, social and civil clubs) for our youth.
- Support community groups (churches, PTA's, business and professional organizations).
- Promote a **mind-change**, on the part of everyone connected with our schools, which will stop the blaming for the ills which exist in our society on everyone else and will initiate the acceptance of personal responsibility.
- Promote **resurgence** of respect and valuing of the lives of each and every person we encounter regardless of whether we admire, condone or respect them or the way they live.
- Promote a **shared vision**, a shared purpose, a shared understanding of what a safe school, district, community, city, county, state, nation and world can be.
- Promote a **total community involvement** and commitment to translating the vision of safe schools into a reality.
- Promote a **developmentally appropriate training and experiences approach**, designed to teach the skills necessary to interact with others in appropriate and effective ways, integrated into the total pre-school to twelfth grade curricula.
- Promote a **new** way of **"doing school"** which allows all the persons involved, students as well as adults, to function as powerful, contributing members of the organization.

CRIME REDUCTION IN SOUTH CAROLINA SCHOOLS

By developing and approving legislative remedies to address these issues, the **LEGISLATURE** can improve the safety of students and adults in South Carolina schools.

LEGISLATORS CAN:

- Ask employers to grant 4 hours paid leave per year to employees who are parents which will allow them to visit and be involved in their child's school.
- Require that a delinquent juvenile on probation be required to attend school or an alternative school and maintain acceptable behavior and passing grades in four subjects.
- Make sure that existing laws concerning possession of weapons on school grounds are enforced - that violators are arrested, prosecuted and appropriately penalized.
- Require juvenile court counselors to notify school officials within 24 hours when a student of that school has committed violent acts or sold drugs off school property.
- Require juvenile probation and parole counselors to confer with school officials and to conduct regular visits with their clients who attend school and assist with the enrollment of their clients who are eligible to return to school.
- Revise confidentiality laws to allow information relating to the criminal activity of students to be shared between law enforcement agencies and schools.
- Require incidents which involve serious injury or the threat of future injury to be reported by school officials to the law enforcement agency immediately; amend the current reporting required so that **SLED** becomes the responsible agency for compiling and reporting school crime data and the enforcing agency to deal with schools failing to report criminal incidents.
- Make it a misdemeanor to fail to store firearms in a reasonable manner for the protection of minors and fail to warn a person of the law when transferring a firearm.
- Penalize adults when their weapons are found in a minor's possession.
- Require funds to be made available from the legislature to provide alternative programs for students unable to return to school because of illegal acts or expulsion from school.

- Provide funds from the legislature for the establishment of programs for each school district in collaboration with other agencies in conflict resolution, peer mediation and other programs that address responsible decision making.

- Require all agencies that deal with youth to teach conflict resolution techniques to the youth and, where possible, to their parents. **(DSS, JJ, etc.)**

- Establish a state information clearing house and resource center for school safety.

CRIME REDUCTION IN SOUTH CAROLINA SCHOOLS

A proposal of **PARENT** involvement to help stop violence in schools and improve the safety of students and adults in South Carolina schools.

PARENTS CAN:

- Make education a **top** priority. Communicate with schools.
- Volunteer to serve on the School Improvement Council and in school activities.
- Develop business partnerships to support worthwhile programs in the schools such as **Silence the Violence Campaign, Conflict Resolution, Mentorship programs** and **Service Learning programs**.
- Create a Safe School Committee to work with the School Improvement Council.
- Set up parent support groups to talk about common problems.
- Get involved with community task forces and other groups that help young people.
- Show interest in your child's program in school. Talk about school each day.
- Talk to teachers about your child's behavior pattern and academic progress.
- Be generous with **praise** for your children. Offer four positive comments for each negative one.
- Serve as **role models** by being present in school buildings to support orderly learning and positive behavior.

CRIME REDUCTION IN SOUTH CAROLINA SCHOOLS

A proposal of **STUDENT** involvement to help stop violence in schools and improve the safety of students and adults in South Carolina schools.

STUDENTS CAN:

- Become actively involved in the facets of school that affect them.
- Refuse to allow a few troubled students to disrupt their learning and their safety at school.
- Involve themselves in the development of school safety plans.
- Become trained in peer mediation process and conflict resolution techniques to help defuse potential problems.
- Keep administrators informed about the presence of unauthorized visitors on campus.
- Promote positive programs to involve all students in the activities provided for students.
- Become **active leaders** and **positive role models** for all to emulate.
- Become involved in internships and service learning programs to improve their knowledge and skills and to promote the quality of their school.
- Insist that their parents become involved in school activities.
- Support the efforts of their school administrators to provide for their safety. Work with administrators to set up a way to anonymously report suspicious activities and rumors. Look into having a **"student court"** at your school to deal with problems.